He Has Risen

Mark 16:1-20

Key Verse: 16:6 "Don't be alarmed." He said, "You are looking for Jesus of Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him."

Thank God for Mark's gospel study thus far. There are four gospels in the New Testament, and all these conclude with Jesus' world mission command. Today we will study the resurrection of Christ and his world mission command. Even though today is not Easter Sunday, we will renew the meaning of his resurrection and world mission command as the conclusion of Mark's gospel study.

First, He has risen! (1-14) Several women appear on the last pages of Jesus' story. They were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome. The Bible values the role of these women as the witnesses of Jesus' resurrection. After the Sabbath was over, they were on their way to the tomb to anoint Jesus' body. They were faithful women who showed their unchanging love and devotion for Jesus even after he died. But the hearts of these women were heavy and dark with the death of Jesus. They also wondered how they could access the tomb because the tomb was blocked by a huge stone. "***Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb***? (3) But what happened when they arrived at the tomb? Look at verse 4. "***But when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away.***" To their surprise, the stone was rolled away and the door was opened. A miracle happened! This story encourages us when we confront a huge stone which blocks our access to God. The stone could be our unchanged sinful desire, a broken relationship, financial difficulty, and so on. Whenever we think of this stone, our hearts become heavy and dark. But a miracle will happen when we do not give up and pray like these women. When we do not give up and pray, God will remove the stone away from our sight. Amen!

Look at verse 5. "***As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed.***" According to John's gospel, the young man was an angel, while Mary thought that he was a gardener. What was the angel's message? "***Don't be alarmed," he said. "You are looking for Jesus of Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him.***" (6) The women were afraid because of the empty tomb and the sudden appearance of the angel. But they didn't need to be afraid because Jesus had risen. He rose again from the dead. Then why was the resurrection of Jesus important in human history and why is it called 'gospel' which means 'good news?' Indeed, the two consecutive events of Jesus, crucifixion and resurrection, changed human history, from death to life, from darkness to light, and from curse to blessing. The resurrection of Jesus especially created new history in human life. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15:17 that if there was no resurrection of Christ, we are still in our sins. He also said in Roman 10:9 that if we declare with our mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in our hearts that God raised him from the dead, we will be saved. Peter said in 1 Peter 1:3 that in his great mercy God gave us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Jesus promised our own resurrection in this, "*Because I live, you also will live*." (Jn 14:19) Paul confirmed our own resurrection because of the resurrection of Christ in this, "*But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep*." (1 Co 15:20) As a result, the resurrection of Jesus must be the good news of great joy for all people. We sing the hymn 'Because He Lives'. *Because he lives, I can face tomorrow. Because he lives, all fear is gone*." Because Jesus lives again, we are not in our sins anymore. Because he lives, we are saved. Because he lives, we overcome the power of darkness and death. Amen! Is it the good news?

The angel taught the women what to do first as the witnesses of Jesus' resurrection. It was to share the good news with his disciples. "***But go, tell his disciples and Peter. 'He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.***'" (7) The women had no time to be sentimental because they had a mission. The angel gave them a mission to tell the good news. Those who have a mission from God must not become sentimental but go and spread the good news! This is why the angel told the women, "But go, tell..."

In verses 9-14 Jesus rebukes his disciples' unbelief. Even though Mary Magdalene told them that Jesus was alive and that she had seen him, they did not believe her. According to Luke's gospel they thought that she spoke nonsense (Lk 24:11). They also didn't believe the testimonies of the two disciples who were on the way to Emmaus. (12; Lk 24:13-23) So, Jesus visited the eleven while they were eating and rebuked them severely for their lack of faith and stubborn refusal to believe it. (14) There is no other solution but rebuke for those who show their lack of faith or stubborn refusal.

Second, world mission command (15-20) After rebuking them, Jesus gave them a mission. Look at verses 15-16. "***He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.***" Their mission was to go into the world and preach the gospel to all creation. There is no exception for the gospel. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. This is the power of the gospel. Paul said that he was not ashamed of the gospel because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile. (Ro 1:16) Therefore, Jesus' world mission command is not an option, but submission. Jesus gave the same command to his disciples in Matthew's gospel in a different form: "*Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age*." (Mt 28:19-20) But his disciples were powerless. They were too weak to go out and even open their mouths. So, Jesus asked them to wait until they received power from above. Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit. "*But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth*." (Ac 1:8)

In verses 17-18 Jesus promised his disciples to give signs which would accompany them. Look at verses 17-18. "***And these signs will accompany those who believe. In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues. They will pick up snakes with their hands and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well***." Wow! What signs for those who believe! God will give them power and authority to drive out demons and heal the sick. God will protect them from all danger and diseases. All these signs come from the power of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit overpower the flesh. The disciples will receive the power of resurrection from the Holy Spirit. They will also speak in new tongues. This means that they will overcome the language barrier. I pray that we may all experience these signs when we preach the gospel. I pray that all these signs may follow each of us today, in our families and our ministry. Amen!

After the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, he was taken up into heaven and he sat at the right hand of God. (19) According to Acts 1:9-11 the two angels of the Lord appeared to them and told them that the same Jesus would come again in the same way he was taken up to heaven. Jesus will come again in the cloud with power and glory. How did the disciples respond to Jesus' command? They obeyed and went. Look at verse 20. ***"Then the disciples went out and preached everywhere, and the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it.***" They went out and preached everywhere. Last week 14 members of student leaders from Chicago UBF visited us. I took them to Wash U, SLU, and UMSL for prayer and fishing. After a brief prayer, the student leaders spread out and preached the gospel everywhere. They obeyed Jesus' command and preached the gospel in UMSL. Soon they brought three names who showed their interest in Bible study. They are Kevin and Holly, UMSL students, who promised to meet me next Wednesday. The student leaders were our guests. But they obeyed Jesus' world mission command and went out. Some of them are new beginners. But the Lord worked with them, too. Please pray for 14 leaders to become powerful witnesses of Jesus and disciple makers and pray for Kevin and Holly.

This Thursday I went to Chicago to join the inauguration ceremony for the new General Director of UBF Church International. I took a train, expecting to arrive on time. But the train got delayed for 6 hours because of an accident from a train ahead of us. I had to stay in a train for 6 hours without having food. But God gave me a chance to meet a Northwestern PhD student who was returning to Chicago after meeting his girlfriend. I shared the gospel with him, explaining why he had to believe in Jesus. He showed his desire to know God more if the chance is given. We exchanged our information and promised to keep in touch. God helped me to use every opportunity to share the gospel in season and out of season. Please pray for Hao Yin so that he may continue to contact me and study the Bible in Chicago UBF. I share my testimony because we can preach the gospel everywhere, not only on campus, but also at a grocery store, Home Depot, in a train, at a public park, and so on. There are so many people who are perishing and dying without hearing the good news. May God help us to use every opportunity to preach the gospel. Amen!

God is living. The Lord will work with us. God is faithful. As he had promised, he raised Jesus from the dead. He will keep his promise with us because he is faithful. I believe that when we obey Jesus' world mission command, all these signs will accompany us. Jesus will work with us through the Holy Spirit, and he will confirm his word by these signs. In Jesus’ name we will drive out demons. In Jesus' name we will speak in new tongues. We'll be in a dangerous situation, but it will not hurt us at all. We will heal the sick when we place our hands and pray in the name of Jesus. These signs are not only for 12 disciples in Jesus’ day, but also for us today, for you and me, and for all those who believe and share the gospel of Jesus Christ. May God richly bless you when you believe and preach the gospel to all creation. Amen!